

AMERICAPRESENTS

BOXING

Testimony of Dan Goossen, President of America Presents, Ltd.

April 22, 1999

Good morning and thank you for having me provide my thoughts on these very important issues within our industry. My name is Dan Goossen and I am President of America Presents. We promote in excess of 40 events a year Worldwide. I have been involved in boxing for over 18 years and have most recently participated as a member of the NAAG Boxing Task Force in formulating recommendations to correct both the perceived and actual problems that exist within our great industry

When fans view a football game and there is a bad call made by a referee, even a call that may decide the outcome of the game, no one yells fix. The fans and media and everyone else perceive it simply as a bad call. The same reaction applies with bad calls in basketball, baseball, etc. There is no perception by anyone that the official is biased towards one team or the other. More importantly, the official that "made the bad call" does not have his integrity questioned.

Unfortunately, in boxing when an official makes a comparable bad call in the refereeing or judging of a professional boxing contest, the immediate fan and media reaction is quite the contrary. In fact, the view of the typical fan nowadays appears to be that such official and others associated with that particular boxing event performed an intentional act as part of an overall

unscrupulous scheme.

This public perception is at the foundation of why immediate changes are necessary in the manner in which we, and I say we as all participants in the boxing industry, must insist upon changes that instill within the public the confidence that the boxing event being staged is at the same level as the other major sports. Therefore, any changes that we might propose, or your Committee might enact into Legislation, must have as its foundation corrective measures to restore the public confidence in our business.

We, as promoters of boxers and boxing events need to be the leaders in proposing, enforcing and implementing these changes and then to carry them out. There has been much discussion regarding the specific areas of change, including the manner in which professional boxing matches are scored through a so-called "open scoring system," standardized forms of promotional and management agreements with boxers and uniform health and safety standards for boxers. Some of these recommendations we support, such as standardized contracts and uniform medical and health standards, and certain of these proposals we oppose, such as open scoring.

Rather than focus on open scoring so that the fans **"can see a crime in the making"** as one of our colleagues has stated, we believe that the perceived and actual problems should be corrected at a much earlier stage, namely in the training, education and standards upon which judges and referees are permitted to be placed in the position of affecting the outcome of major sporting events. Boxing should be treated no differently than any other major sports league where the referees and judges undertake

comprehensive training programs and there are uniform rules applied in determining infractions, as well as ongoing evaluations and assessments of their performance. Then, as in the other sports leagues, the officials that have the merit and qualifications earn the privilege of working the major events.

Once again, as promoters we must be the leaders, and take the responsibility, to ensure the integrity of the sport and that the public acknowledges that while errors may in fact continue in a subjective scoring system that everything that can possibly be done to avoid, or at least minimize, such mistakes are undertaken. Most importantly, we must get to the point that when an error happens in boxing that the boxers, the public and media react the way they do in other sports. We need competence and honorability. To correct this problem we would like to publicly call for the establishment of a formal Officials' School for the specific purpose of training referees and judges and that the promoters be responsible for the funding of such training and education system.

I am not here to say that the many issues that have been raised over recent years, in which your Committee is here to address today, will be resolved through the establishment of an Official's School, but I will say that the foundation of the problem with boxing today is its perceived lack of integrity. If we had a head of officials, such as Mills Lane, and any official who worked in the United States, whether from a foreign country or domestically, was required to go through this school, we would be on the road to instill the confidence of the boxers and the public. Mr. Lane's reputation is impeccable worldwide. He exudes competence and honesty and you can be assured that every official would be accountable to him.

As early as one year ago when the initial legislation was proposed we instructed our General Counsel to distribute a letter among the principal boxing promoters asking for their support in uniformly addressing the issues before your Committee. In that letter we requested that the promoters take the lead in reviewing the legislation to ensure that it is consistent with the practices that need to be followed within our sport and that we collectively address such matters to compliment the efforts undertaken by your Committee. A year has now brought us the ability to have this public forum to reaffirm what we placed in writing a year ago; namely, that the promoters must be at the forefront of these changes and take the lead in both supporting and implementing such changes for the betterment and growth of our sport.

We must also be very mindful that without change and a material change in the public's perception of what we do for a living our fan base will slowly but steadily dwindle. The boxers deserve to have qualified, competent and honest officials decide their fate, not to mention the responsibility to television broadcasters, venues, media and everyone else associated with boxing events.

As a company we do not advocate each and every change that has been proposed, both by your Committee or the Attorneys General of the Boxing Task Force. However, we are fully supportive of the need for change and many of the provisions that have been proposed address the origin of the issue, but not fully solving the problem as noted above. Therefore, we request that your Committee go even further in mandating changes that are necessary to once again reestablish the public trust in our sport and that the promoters, as well as everyone else associated with the sport, be responsible and accountable for their actions in a uniform and consistent manner whereby the deceptive practices by some are removed from the equation, but the free market system that applies to other businesses, not only the sports industry,

could be applied to the boxing industry.

The future of boxing lies in the hands of this Committee along with the leadership of the people who love this sport and as a group we need to immediately correct the ills of our business for the integrity and welfare of our business, and especially for the boxers and the public.

Please be assured that we remain available to address with you any questions that you might have with regard to our position. Thank you.

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